

210p9mc33 9

to his "Stationery" business; the publisher found out
that he was a man of 'push' + 'intelligence', + sent him
the best new books 'on sale or return.' The coming
of new books was hailed with delight in the
living back parlour, the delightful shimmering of
the new pages was a continual stimulus to
the intellectual life of the two, ^{there} they were kept in
touch with the thoughts of the day.
Not only so; but Ellen knew that reading is not
thinking, + in one of the passages that John had marked
in ^{the} ~~the~~ book that it was well for her to do a little
steady thinking (not-dreaming) every day. + to
write her thoughts: so while her fingers were busy
with the delicate stitching which the initiated will
understand. was about-just then, her mind
occupied itself definitely with the thoughts the
book she had in hand calling up. + with some
thought about the bringing up of a child, + took
her not-ten minutes to jot down what she had
thought. John liked to see her note-book, + the
jottings led to many delightful talks. They were
not dull by any means, those people of the little
Stationers' Shop, + their talk, if you will believe it,
was as good + as brilliant, ^{as} as you might hear
in that famous London Club which exists "to
promote conversation." Where love sharpens the
wit + speech + courtesy oil the tongue. + the
commonplace people drop pearls + diamonds in their

many things in her heart. Concentration in one sense was easy; never before had the Psalms & hymns been so precious; she could have read all day long in her Bible, but took of family histories. All day she went about singing & making melody in her heart & in psalms & hymns & spiritual songs. Never before had there been so much that she needed to say to her Father as now that she, too, was looking forward to the honor & joy of parenthood, the crowning perfection of human nature, whereby it becomes, in just one respect, perfect - as the Father in heaven is perfect!

But concentration meant, she knew, more than this: did it not include such diligence in keeping the door of her heart - as she had never practised before? Her very love for her husband, the very ease & sweetness of her life, did they not tempt her to 'let herself out' in a thousand ways which it was shame & pity to remember? She kept not a journal, but a private 'conscience book' - sentences like these were too frequent for her peace: -

Jan. 13th The parts of the big, thick pudding I made was, somehow, doughy. John said nothing, but he did not enjoy his dinner, & I was as cross as two sticks! I could feel the cloud coming over my face. John talked & cheerily answered & was saying inside because he would not eat his dinner, when yesterday's stew had turned me so ill!

Jan. 16th John's sister Fanny came to tea, & she asked me a lot of questions about where we got everything & what I could learn, but I got on my high horse, & behaved like a self queen - What a naughty she must think me! And how they

110 p 12 June 3/4

They must not pity poor John for having such an idiotic wife. Well, I believe the worst they can think."

This last entry sets a ~~little~~ ^{little} cast on the bag. John's people were rather trying. Ellen had come from a home where she would not meet with even such stretching, but, all the same, she had the innate gentleness of nature ~~of nature~~ which manifests itself in gentle thoughts & considerate ways. In these ways, John, too, was a gentleman & was becoming more refined every day under the influence of his gentle wife. But his people, his comfortable well-to-do mother, who had a good business of her own (his father was dead), & the two comfortably married sisters who had ^{black} silk dresses & real skins coats for occasions, & were inclined to look down on a bride, whoever she was, who came into the family without these good things; & the wife of Tom Lodge, the upholsterer, John's brother, who was as comfortably off as her two sisters, in-law - it must be confessed that Ellen found the commissions of hers somewhat far from in her side. She could get on with the men better than the women, & she scolded herself (with some justice) for her suspicious airs, but somehow it was terribly flat to talk to people whose ideas were bounded by what they included in the frequent phrase "comfortably off." She knew they were, in all, good natured, diligent, honest, kindly souls,

the worst of it was, she could trace her failure to feel
in with them to a certain snobishness in herself.
The fact was, they looked down on John then as the poor
folk of the family. 'Poor John, he'd never be' been a
possession of fatherhood ~~that~~ lived. You see it took
mother a bit o' time to turn herself round, ~~and~~
possession-job just offered. It's been in John's way,
poor chap. He might ha' done better for himself."

How excellent people of this stamp look upon
an idea as what it really is, a possession, a
thing to stick to, & a thing you can't - air too often.
Mother was seldom at a family meeting but this form
of words was gone through. And Ellen winced: why
could they not see that her husband's little finger
was worth their whole bodies? And why would
they measure her by their standard of fault from
ideal chain coats? When she married, she had been
quite prepared to be very precious to John's people. She
did not put it to herself, but she had meant to
patronise them very sweetly, & they were to find out
at last what a charming thing it was to have
a lady in the family. But here were the tables
turned with a vengeance! She knew she was
only a 'poor little soul' in their eyes, & to be
patronised where you had meant to ~~condescend~~
is just one of the things a woman finds trying.

But now, in the light of the concentrated eye
which she saw to be her bounden duty & which for
who could tell how many heart-sufferings in her might
disfigure her little child - the thing began her way to
love

210P/40m32
14
"Love" John's people in sincerity - ~~truth~~.

It's astonishing how easy a thing becomes once you set yourself to do it; there were many things she could ask these experienced mothers about, & motherly sympathy of course drew them together. Then, somehow, she had got rid of that little air of superiority which they had been having patience with all this time. And the last ~~truth~~ barrier was broken down when one morning ~~she~~ she went to ask Mrs. Fairbottom about a little pattern, & found she was not at home - had been out all night. ^{Clipping up for} ~~helping~~ That poor widow who did this 'Chering' & who had three children down with scarlet-fever!

Ellen grew very red as she listened. That Fairbottom hastened to reassure her. ^{particulars}
"Don't you be afeared; my wife's very particular; child forget everything this fortnight before she comes into the room. You see we've got children of our own."

But it was not that kind Mrs. Fairbottom was mistaken; it was the chance of sudden correction that dyed Ellen's cheeks. Here was the good woman she had presumed to look down upon visiting the sick, & no doubt, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, & - she!

When John came ⁱⁿ to dinner the sight of his wife's face filled him with ~~dark~~ dismay. She had evidently been crying as he had never known her to cry. All the same, she did not look unhappy, but more than usually much sweet. So he put it down to 'her health' & said nothing. Not until night did she tell him

of the discovery she had made of her own selfishness & hardness. He had been a deal ~~too~~ happy this last year, he said, shall forget these people. They talked over the matter for into the night & came to a few practical conclusions. One was, that they would have an evening every week for any young ladies & in shops or other lonely young women whom they could get to know. They could sit down much for them perhaps, but a kindly welcome & a cup of coffee would be cheering, & talk would take care of itself. Then, there were these poor families they knew of where it was true up-hill work to keep alive. There was the journeyman book-binder who helped whenever a book-binding job came in but seemed to have no work between whiles. How in the world did he support a sickly wife & four children? Then, there was poor Mrs. Green who did their washing, with her little penniless & her paralytic husband. & Lin's people - Lin was the errand boy. Truly there is no lack of introductions for any one who wants to make friends with the poor.

Ellen went to sleep with an easier heart. She had found again the middle ground & thought for many poor families, & without thinking of it, she missed this forced hiatus of her life. Perhaps our life can be quite happy that is not in touch with the very poor. What had made her so miserable was the fear that her little child should come into the world with the promise

a hard selfish heart. But - before, somehow, vanished,
^{up} ~~with~~ the purposes of love & kindness that he meant
 to carry out.

Truly, a little child shall lead them. Before her
 marriage, Ellen Bridges had ^{was} been a nice girl enough
 but - just a little commonplace; but now, the
 mere foreshadowing of the presence of a little child
 had given her a breadth of thought; a refinement
 & tenderness of feeling which made her a woman of
 very different calibre to any the promise of her
 girlhood contained.

Her father noticed the change:

"I declare Ellen improves every day! 'tis a way
 you wouldn't expect. Instead of becoming common
 because she has married a small tradesman, she
 strikes me as being more of a lady now than in
 her days."
